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# SOUTHEASTERN STORIES



CONTENTS

The Old SOUTHEASTERN STORIES Lotta Islands --- 1

How Raven Brought Fire ----- 6

How Woman ----- 7

How T COMPILED AND ILLUSTRATED --- 11

BY KATHLEEN LYNCH

The Man Who Married The Eagle ----- 11

Raven and The Whale ----- 13

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John R. Swanton, 1909 "Tlingit Myths and Texts", Bureau of

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## CONTENTS

The Origin of The Queen Charlotte Islands ---	1
How Raven Brought Fire -----	5
Frog Woman -----	7
How The Raven Gets His Nose Back -----	11
THE ORIGIN OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS	
The Man Who Married The Eagle -----	15
Long ago there was only one village on the Queen Charlotte Islands. It was called Kikwaka. Everyone from this village used to go out to fish for halibut. Everyone except one man.	
Raven and The Whale -----	19
The East Wind and The North Wind -----	23
One day the Beaver and Porcupine -----	25
strong on the end of his line. When he finally pulled it in, however, all he had was a little halibut.	
That evening he took the fish home, and said to his wife, "I have a very small halibut. It might bring me luck."	

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## THE ORIGIN OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS

Long ago there was only one village on the Queen Charlotte Islands. It was called Town-far-out. Every day the people from this village used to go out to fish for halibut. Everyone except one man caught lots of fish.

One day this unlucky man had a bite. He felt something very strong on the end of his line. When he finally pulled it in, however, all he had was a little halibut.

That evening he took the fish home, and said to his wife, "I have a very small halibut. It might bring me luck."





The man's wife took her knife down to clean the fish, but then she saw how little it was. She just picked it up by the tail and threw it up on the beach.

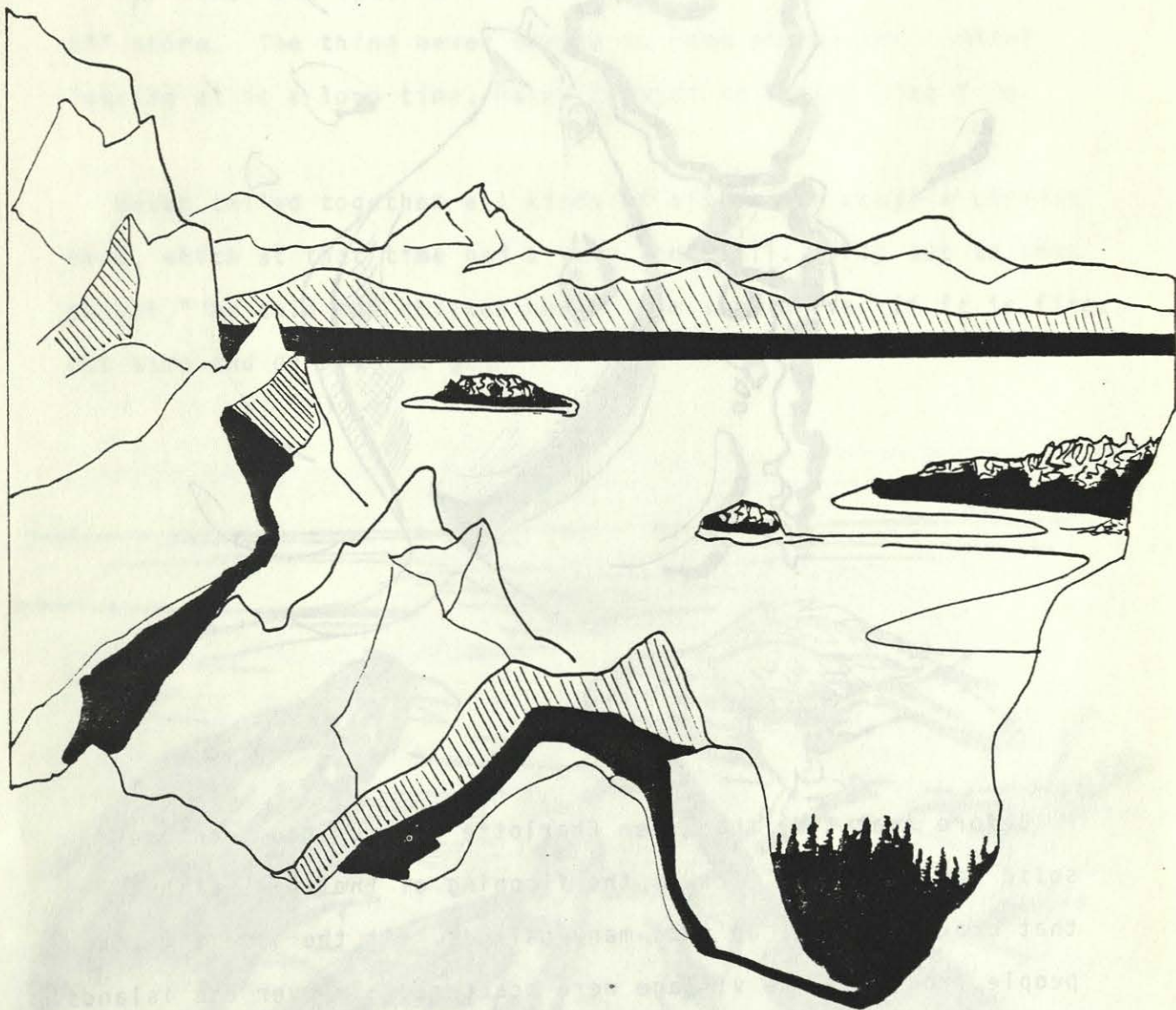
The halibut, which was still alive, began flopping up and down. It flopped faster and faster and started getting larger and larger. Soon it was the size of a paddle. It was still getting bigger.

Everyone was watching the fish now. Before long it was as large as the big pieces of red-cedar bark used for roofing. Next it covered the whole beach. By evening it was a monster, smashing the town to pieces, with its flopping movement.



Before that time the Queen Charlotte Islands had been one solid body of land. It was the flopping of that big halibut that broke the land up into many islands. At the same time the people from that one village were scattered all over the islands. This story explains how the Queen Charlotte Islands were formed, and how the people were spread over them.



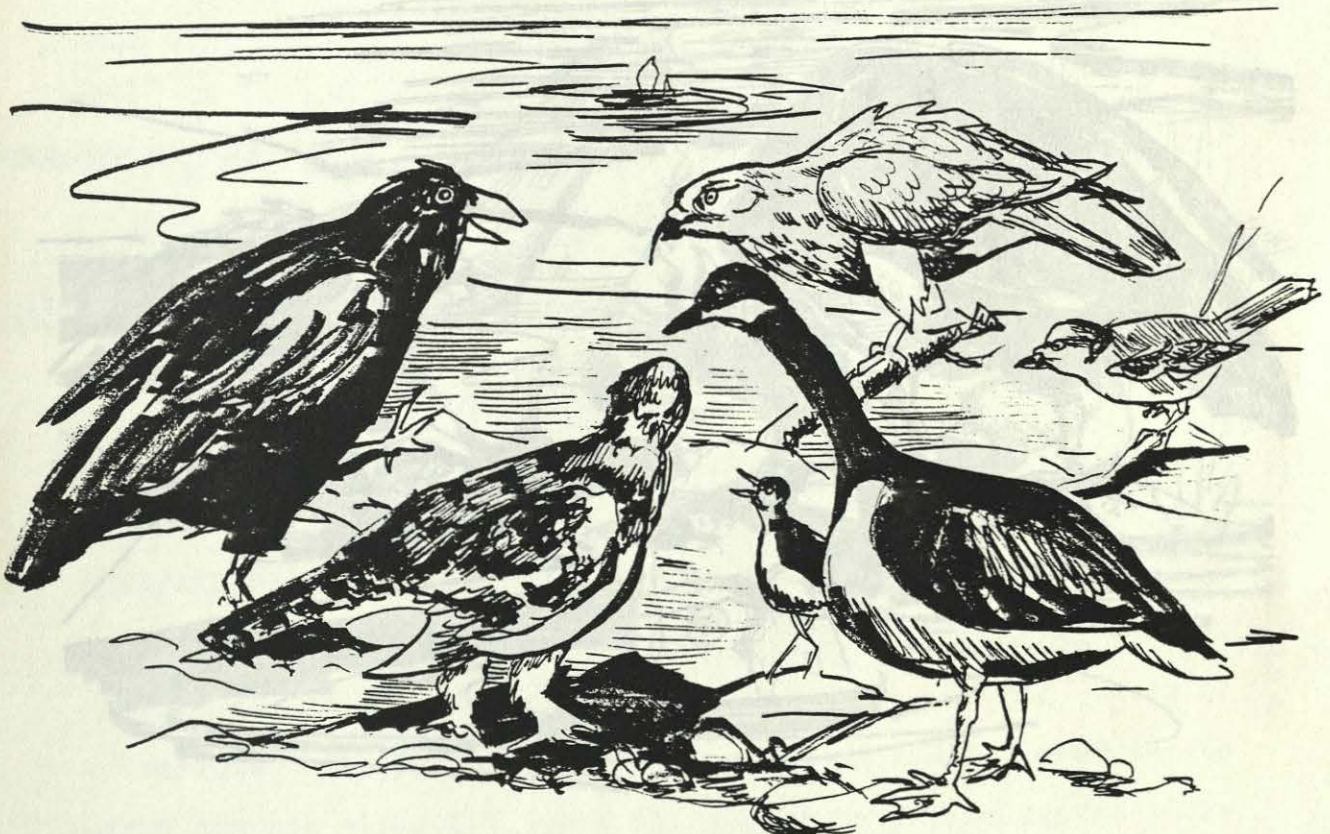




### HOW THE RAVEN BROUGHT FIRE

One time long ago, Raven saw something floating in the water off shore. The thing never seemed to come any nearer. After looking at it a long time, Raven thought it looked like fire.

Raven called together all kinds of birds. He chose a chicken hawk, which at that time had a very long bill. "Fly out to that object," he told the chicken hawk. "Be very brave. If it is fire, get some and do not let go."





The chicken hawk flew out to the fire. He grabbed a mouthful of the fire in his bill. Then he started flying back to shore as fast as he could go. By the time he got back to Raven, his bill was burned right off. That is why the chicken hawk has a short bill today.

As soon as Raven got the fire, he put it into some red cedar and white beach stones. That is why fire can still be found today all over the world.

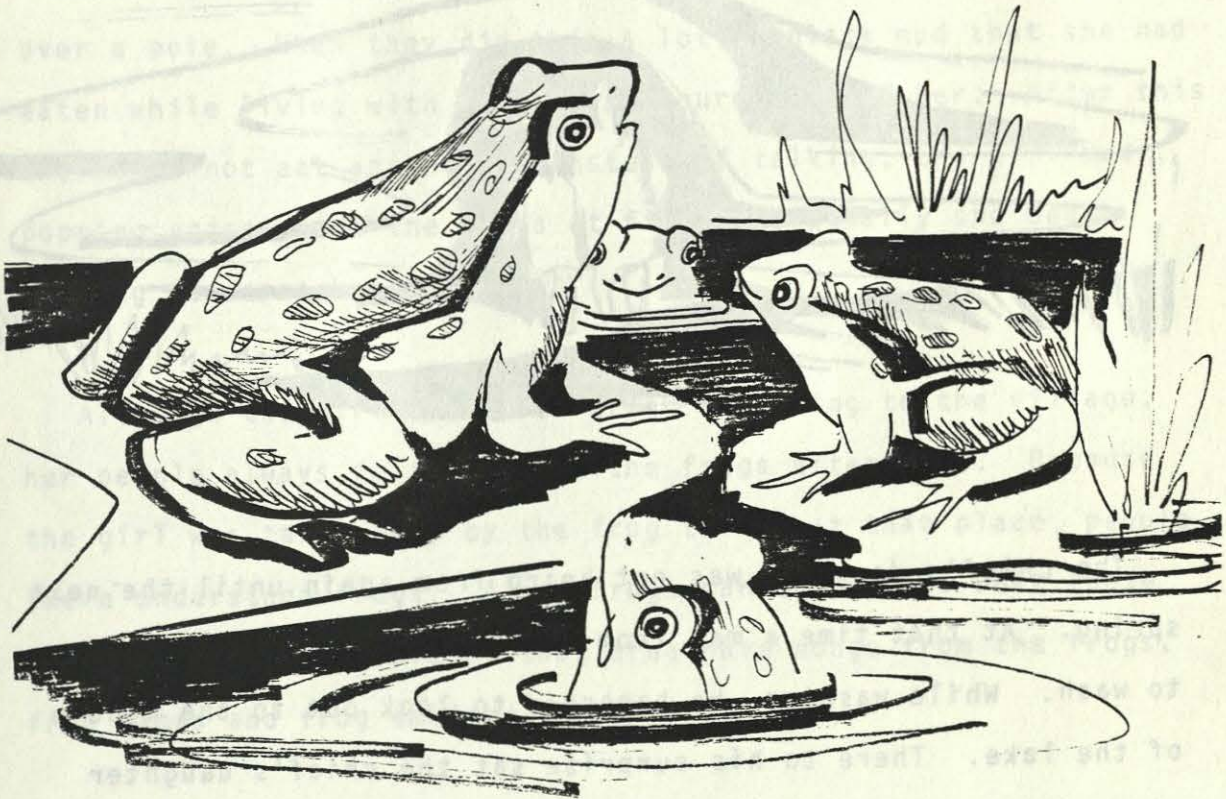




## FROG WOMAN

There was a large town in the Yakutat country. Beside the town was a big lake full of frogs. In the middle of the lake was a swampy patch where many frogs often sat.

One day the chief's daughter was walking by the lake. She made fun of the frogs. Picking up a big frog in her hand, she spoke to him. "There are so many of you," she began, "you must do things the way human beings do. You frogs must sleep together like human beings do."





That night when the chief's daughter went outdoors a young man came to her. "Will you marry me?" he asked her. Although she had turned down many men before, this one she wanted to marry right away.

He pointed towards the lake. "There's my father's house right up there," he said. Together they walked in the direction he had pointed. When they got there it seemed as if a door opened for them. It was really the edge of the lake being lifted up. They walked under.



The chief's daughter was not heard from again until the next spring. At that time a man from her town went up to the lake to wash. While washing, he happened to look out to the middle of the lake. There to his surprise sat the chief's daughter right in the middle of a bunch of frogs. Quickly the man rushed



back to the village to tell the girl's father what he had seen.

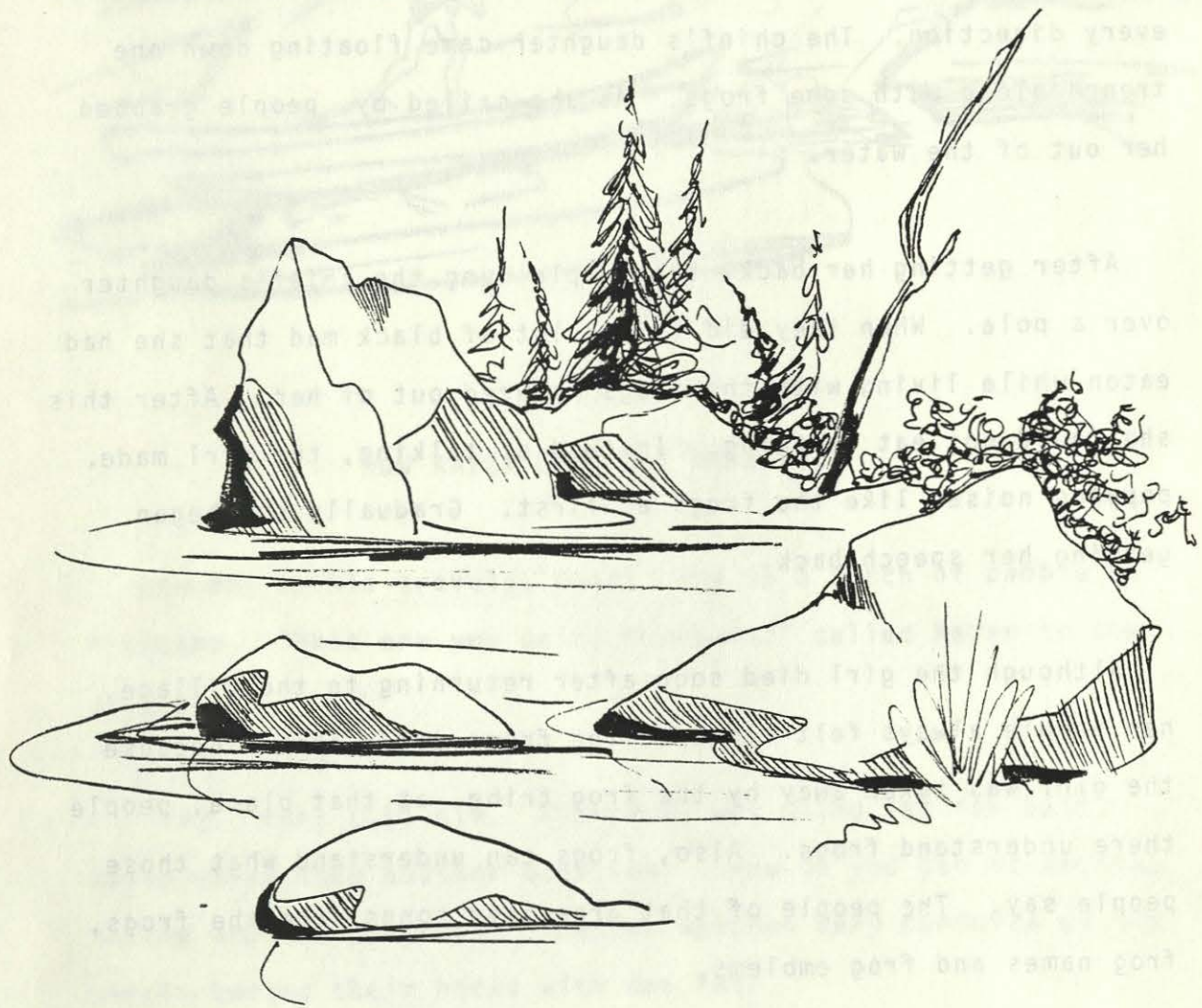
The girl's parents rushed up to the lake. They asked the frogs to give them back their daughter, but the frogs refused. Then the father thought of a plan. He and his friends dug trenches to drain the water out of the lake.

As the water drained from the lake, frogs were scattered in every direction. The chief's daughter came floating down one trench along with some frogs. As she sailed by, people grabbed her out of the water.

After getting her back, the people hung the chief's daughter over a pole. When they did this, a lot of black mud that she had eaten while living with the frogs poured out of her. After this she could not eat anything. Instead of talking, the girl made, popping noises like the frogs at first. Gradually she began getting her speech back.

Although the girl died soon after returning to the village, her people always felt close to the frogs after that. Because the girl was taken away by the frog tribe at that place, people there understand frogs. Also, frogs can understand what those people say. The people of that area have songs from the frogs, frog names and frog emblems.









#### HOW RAVEN GETS HIS NOSE BACK

One day on his travels, Raven came to a bunch of people at fishcamp. "What are you using for bait?" called Raven to the people.

"Fat," they told him. Everybody was using fat for bait. Raven asked them another question. "How do you get it to stay on the hooks?" he asked. Then he watched very carefully as the people baited their hooks with the fat.

When the people went out to fish, Raven slipped into the water. He dove down to the baited hooks, and stole the bait. The people



felt nibbles and jerked up their lines, but the hooks were always empty.

Finally, one old man jerked at just the right moment. He felt he had caught something on his hook. The thing struggled on the end of the line but the old man tugged and tugged. At last he had pulled Raven right under the canoe. Raven gave a mighty kick to the canoe. He got away, but without his nose. It was left sticking on the hook.

When the fisherman pulled up the hook everyone was very excited. "Look," they shouted. "It is a Raven's nose he has caught!" They took the nose up to the chief's house for safe-keeping.

Meanwhile Raven came out of the water. He gathered a lot of spruce gum, and made a new nose out of it for himself. Then he pulled a root hat down over his face and went to town. Once in town, Raven went from house to house visiting. "Do you know who caught that Raven's nose?" he said to the people in the chief's house.

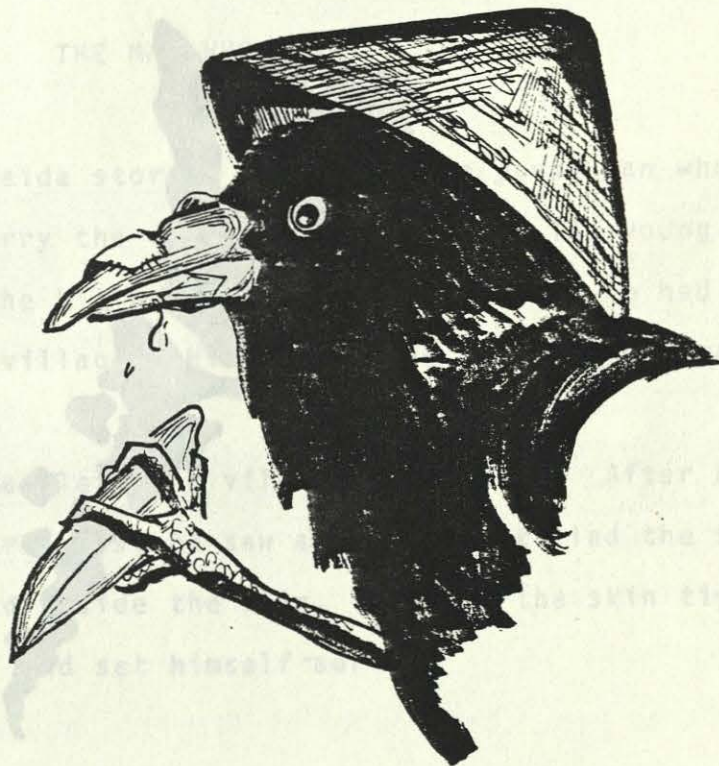




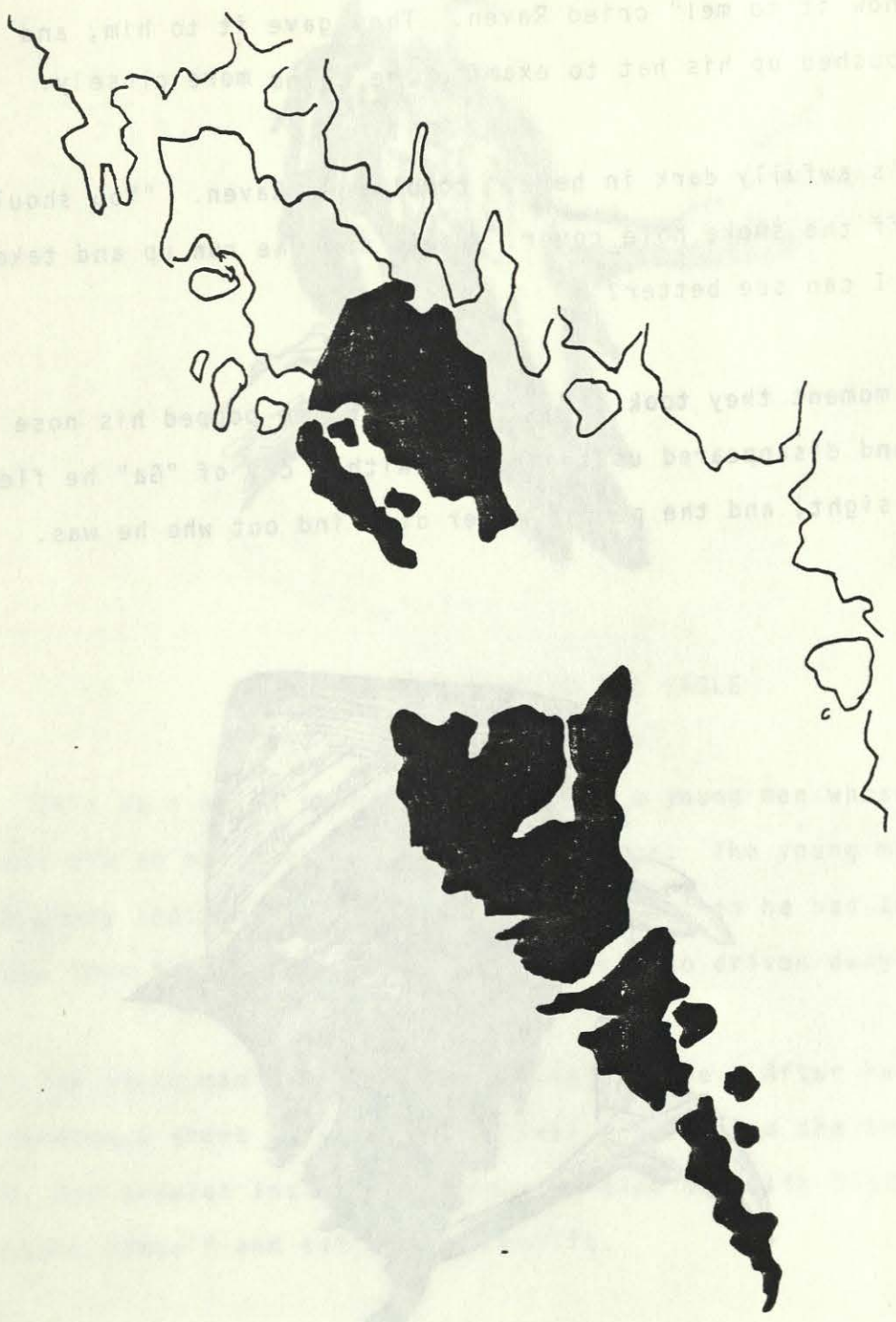
"Sure!" they said to him. "It's right here on the wall."  
"Oh, show it to me!" cried Raven. They gave it to him, and Raven pushed up his hat to examine the thing more closely.

"It's awfully dark in here," complained Raven. "You should take off the smoke hole cover. Could someone run up and take it off so I can see better?"

The moment they took off the cover, Raven popped his nose in place and disappeared up the hole. With a cry of "Ga" he flew out of sight, and the people never did find out who he was.











### THE MAN WHO MARRIED THE EAGLE

This is a Haida story. It is about a young man whose wife left him to marry the village chief's son. The young man was so angry that he killed the chief's son. Then he had to run away from the village. His mother was also driven away to starve.

The young man left the village in a canoe. After he had traveled a short ways, he saw a seal. He killed the seal, skinned it, and crawled inside the skin. He tied the skin tightly around himself and set himself adrift.

After drifting a long time, the seal skin washed up on a beach. The young man heard an eagle cry and felt something land on top of his seal skin. Instead of trying to eat the seal, the eagle



just sat there on the seal skin. It had a hollow sound.

Just then the man took out his knife and cut the seal skin open right under the eagle. He grabbed the eagle by the legs. But instead of an eagle, it turned out to be a girl he was holding by the ankles.



She said to him, "Come up to my father's house with me." He agreed to go with her. When they arrived he saw a fine house with many beds. Over each bed hung an eagle-skin coat.



Soon after that the man decided to marry the eagle girl. At this time each of her brothers gave him an eagle-skin coat. The coats were to help him be a good fisherman and hunter. One coat helped him catch cod, another salmon, another halibut. By wearing another coat, he could catch seal and with another sea lion.

One day while the young man was hunting, he happened to find the spot where his mother was hiding. She told him how the villagers had sent her away. He promised to help her and bring her food.

Each day he brought her food: one day a salmon, the next day a seal, and the next day a sea lion. The fourth day he brought her a whale.

Word soon traveled back to their village about the whale on the beach. All the villagers rushed to the spot to get some meat. They were very surprised to see the old woman they had sent away to starve. She was living there very well with plenty of dried fish and meat.

The old woman started coming towards the village people. When one of the village men saw her he threw a stone and hit her in the face.

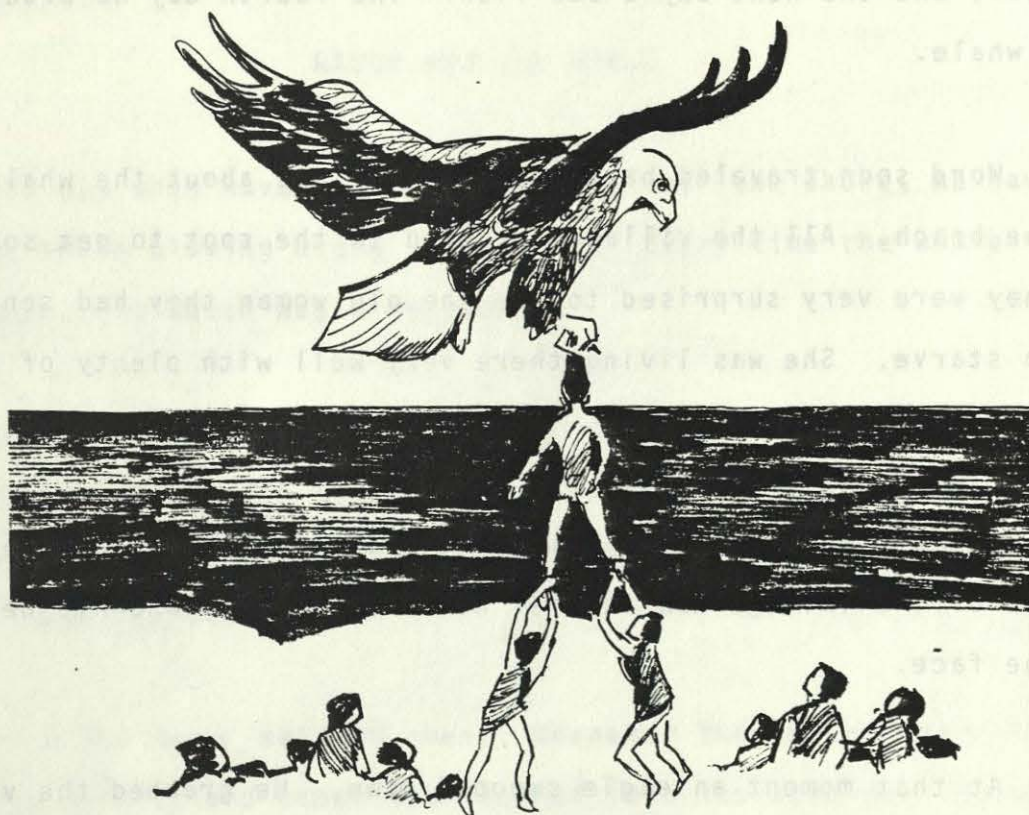
At that moment an eagle swooped down. He grabbed the village man by the hair and flew up into the air with him. Around and around the eagle circled. When the eagle flew low, another man



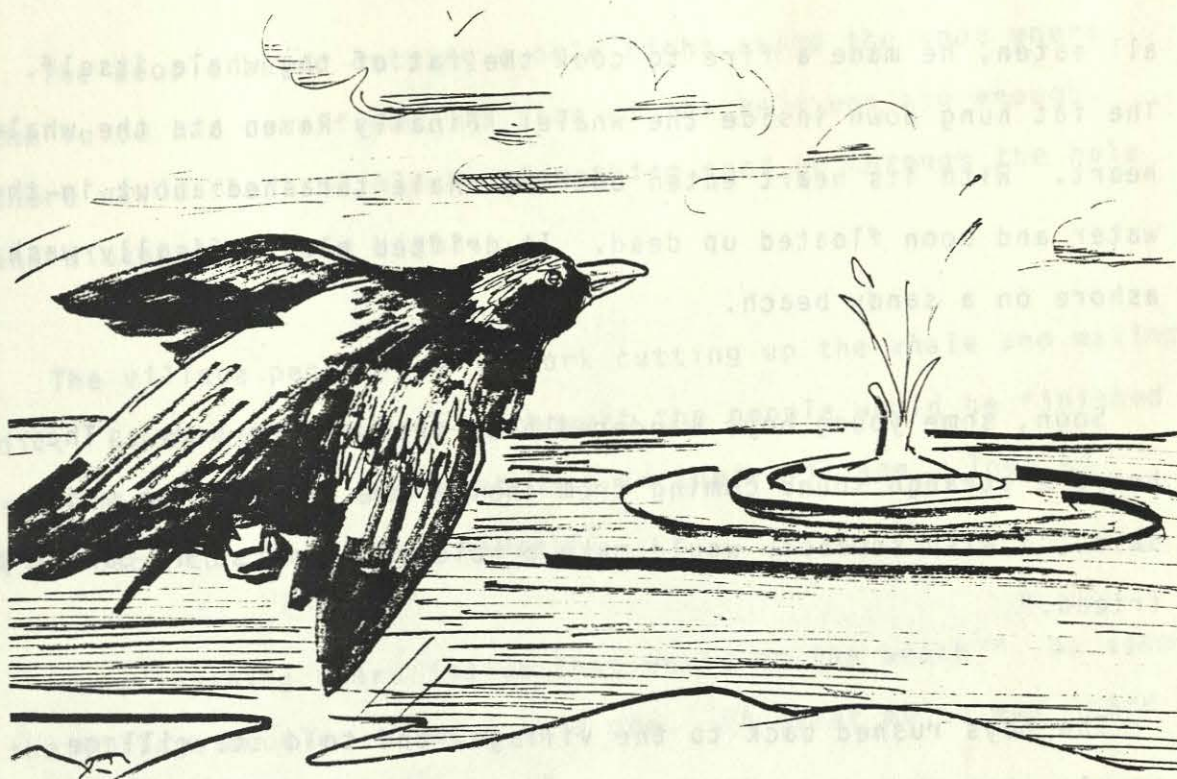
grabbed the first man by the ankles and was unable to let go. One by one all the men of the village grabbed on and were carried into the air by the eagle.

Meanwhile the village women started to cut up the whale. But just then, the old woman poked the whale and it went out to sea. Then the eagle flew out over the ocean. He dropped all the village men into the sea and drowned them.

After this the eagle-man flew back to his wife to live. He kept his wife and mother supplied with plenty of fish and meat.







### RAVEN AND THE WHALE

One day when Raven was flying along near the shore, he saw a large whale blowing along out at sea. Every time the whale came up, its mouth was wide open.

All of a sudden Raven thought of a plan. Taking a knife and something with which to make fire, he waited until the whale came up again. Then he flew right into the whale's mouth, and down into its stomach.

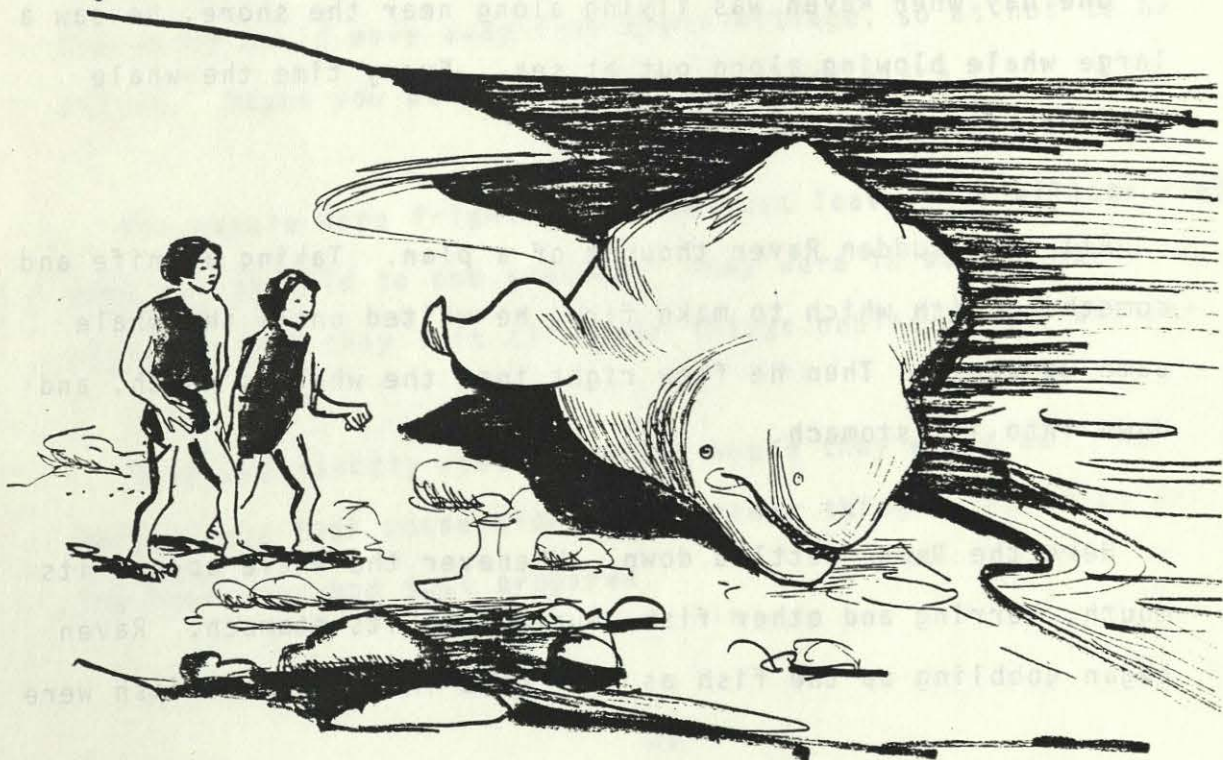
Here the Raven settled down. Whenever the whale opened its mouth, herring and other fish poured into its stomach. Raven began gobbling up the fish as they came in. When the fish were



all eaten, he made a fire to cook the fat of the whale itself. The fat hung down inside the whale. Finally Raven ate the whale's heart. With its heart eaten out the whale thrashed about in the water and soon floated up dead. It drifted along, finally washing ashore on a sandy beach.

Soon, some young boys wandered near the whale's body. They heard a strange sound coming from inside the whale. The voice said, "I wish somebody would make a hole above me so he can be by friend."

The boys rushed back to the village, and told the village people what they had heard. All the villagers came to the spot to see for themselves. As they stood over the whale they heard the voice clearly. "I wish somebody would make a hole above me and be my friend."





The people began cutting a hole right above the spot where the voice had come from. As soon as the hole was big enough, there was a flash of black. Something shot up through the hole and disappeared from sight.

The village people set to work cutting up the whale and making oil. Raven waited until he thought the people would be finished storing all the oil and meat back in their village. Then he flew back to the village himself.

"Was anything heard inside that whale on the beach?" he asked the village people. "Yes," said one. "A queer noise was heard coming from inside the whale."

"I wonder what it was," said Raven. "Long ago," he went on, "whenever a sound was heard inside a whale it meant bad luck. Everybody would move away from their village, so as not to be killed. Maybe you people should leave this place."

The people were frightened. "We must leave this village right away," they said to one another. They were in such a hurry to get away that they left all their things behind in the village.

This was exactly what Raven had hoped they would do. He immediately took possession of all their things, including all the food they had just prepared.



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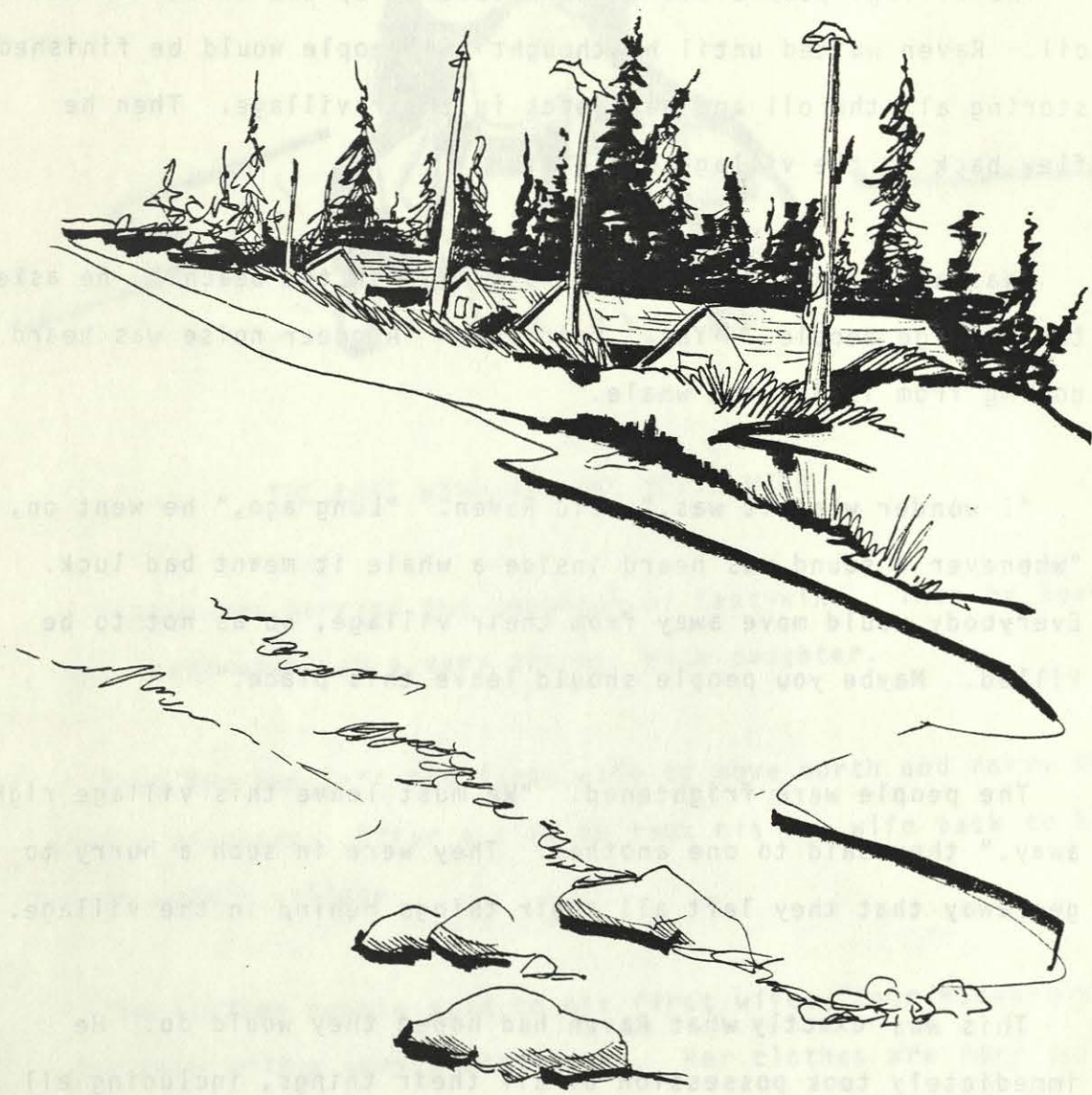
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the food they had just prepared.







### THE EAST WIND AND THE NORTH WIND

A rich man married the daughter of East-wind. Then he heard that North-wind had a very pretty, rich daughter.

Soon the man left his first wife to move north and marry North-wind's daughter. After a time he took his new wife back to his first wife's village.

The village people said to his first wife, "Your husband came back here with a very pretty woman. Her clothes are very valuable. They sparkle all over. They make a noise like bells."



East-wind's daughter became very jealous. "I will soon be able to fix that pretty girl you are talking about!" she said.

Not long after that it began to grow cloudy and warm. Sure enough, the daughter of North-wind lost all her beautiful clothing. It was icicles and frost that were so pretty. When she lost these, she lost her beauty with them.





## BEAVER AND PORCUPINE

Long ago Beaver and Porcupine were great friends. They went everywhere together. The porcupine often visited the beaver's house, but the beaver did not like him to come because Porcupine left quills there.

One day Porcupine told Beaver he wanted to come for a visit. "All right," said Beaver. "I will take you on my back." When Porcupine got on, Beaver did not swim to his house, however. Instead he took Porcupine to a stump in the middle of the lake. "This is my house," said Beaver. Then he swam off leaving Porcupine.





At first Porcupine didn't know what to do. Then he began singing a song on the stump. "Let it become frozen. Let it become frozen," he sang. After a while the lake froze over, and Porcupine was able to walk to shore.

Some time later Beaver and Porcupine were together again. Porcupine said, "Why don't you come to my house now? I will carry you on my back." When Beaver got on Porcupine's back, Porcupine carried him to the top of a very high tree. Then he came down, leaving Beaver. For a long time Beaver was stuck at the top of the tree. Finally he was able to climb down, and they say this is what makes the lines in tree bark today.

